

CHURCH STUFF

(A newsletter for Catholic cadets)

Week of 12 May, 2002

To my Catholic brothers and sisters in the Corps:

The END is in sight, thank God.

But along with that fact comes an endless amount of STRESS.

It's normal...but you can't let it run your life.

The only thing that should "run your life" is your PERSONAL FAITH.

O Lord,
amid the confusion of the day,
give me the CALMNESS of the everlasting hills
that surround West Point.

Break the tensions of my nerves and muscles
with the music of the singing streams
that live in my memory.

Help me to know the magical, restoring power of sleep.

Teach me the art of taking "minute" vacations,
of slowing down to look at a flower,
to chat with a friend,
to pat a dog, to read a few lines from a good book.

Remind me each day, Lord,
of the fable of the hare and the tortoise
that I may know that the race is not always to the swift...
there's more to life than just increasing its speed.

Let me look upward into the branches of the towering oak
and know that it grew great and strong
because it grew SLOWLY and well.

Slow me down, Lord,
and inspire me to send my roots
deep into the soil of life's enduring values
that I may grow toward the stars of my enduring destiny.

Chill out in the Lord.

AN EASTER THOUGHT:

Standing on a London streetcorner,
GK Chesterton (a British Catholic author, died 1936)
was approached by a newspaper reporter.
"Sir, I understand you recently became a Catholic.
May I ask you a question?"
Chesterton replied: "Certainly."
The reporter went on: "What would you do
if the Risen Christ were standing right behind you
at this very moment?"
Chesterton looked the reporter squarely in the eye and said:
"He is."

And this is the most real fact about our spiritual lives:
the Jesus who walked the roads of Judea and Galilee
is the One who stands beside us.
The Jesus of history is the Christ of faith.

The Gospel proclaims a hidden power
in the living presence of the Risen Christ.

For me, summoning the courage to say YES
to the present risen-ness of Jesus Christ
is the most radical demand of the Christian faith.

This YES is scary because it is so personal...
in desolation and abandonment, in the death of a loved one,
in loneliness and fear, in the awareness of the "pharisee" in all of us,
YES is a word not to be spoken frivolously.

This YES is an act of faith, a wholehearted cry of confidence
that my faith in Jesus provides security
not only in the face of death,
but in the face of my own malice.
And YES must be said not just once but repeated over and over
in the ever-changing landscape of life.

And how does the life-giving spirit of the Risen Lord manifest itself?
In our willingness to stand fast,
in our refusal to run away and escape into self-destructive behavior.

RESURRECTION POWER enables us to confront untamed emotions,
to accept pain.
And in that process, we discover that we are not alone,
that we are more than we previously imagined.

As Etty Hillesum, a Dutch Jew who died in Auschwitz in 1943, wrote:

"We are able to safeguard that 'little piece of God in ourselves'.
We make it through the night.
Darkness gives way to the light of morning.

Taken from "Abba's Child"
by Brendan Manning

THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

BACCALAUREATE MASS

The annual BACCALAUREATE MASS for graduating Firsties will be held on Thursday, 30 May, at 1900 at the Chapel. No tickets or reservations are required. Uniform is "India whites". Seating is "first come, first served".

DID YOU KNOW?

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO PONTIUS PILATE?

The figure of Pilate has intrigued people since the time of Christ, but when all is told, there is very little known about him with certainty. He was a Roman equestrian of the Samnite clan of the Pontii (hence the "middle" name Pontius). The meaning of his cognomen "Pilate" is not known, nor does anyone know his actual first name.

In AD 26, the Emperor Tiberius appointed him "procurator" of Judea, Samaria and Idumea, subject to the Roman legate (governor) of Syria, and according to the Jewish historian Josephus, he offended just about everyone. He outraged the Jews by having troops carry their military standards bearing the Emperor's image into Jerusalem (in Jewish eyes, this violated the First Commandment). He financed an aqueduct with money taken from the Temple treasury; he slaughtered some Galileans (over whom he didn't have jurisdiction); he minted coins bearing pagan religious symbols (violating the Roman government's custom of respecting local religious sensibilities).

Another historian (Philo) records a letter from King Herod Agrippa I to the Emperor Caligula, describing Pilate as inflexible, merciless and corrupt and claimed that he executed people without a proper trial.

All of the four Gospels portray him as weak, superstitious, vacillating and hostile to the Jews.

On the other hand, there is a whole body of "apocryphal" literature (literature of questionable authenticity) which was supposedly written by Pilate to the Roman emperors, in which he describes Jesus and his trial, and there is even a legend that towards the end of his life, he converted to Christianity. This cannot be proved.

In another tradition, there's the legend that he committed suicide in AD 39 on orders from the Emperor Caligula. And I once heard that there's a mountain somewhere in Switzerland named "Mons Pilatus", and that it was supposedly the mountain where Pilate killed himself by jumping off a cliff.

In Christian tradition, reaction to Pilate is mixed: the Western Church has always preserved a negative feeling about him, but the Eastern Church (under the influence of

that apocryphal literature that I mentioned) has kept a more positive picture of the man...and the Abyssinian Coptic Church (Ethiopia) even considers him a saint, while the Greek Christian tradition honors his wife (she's mention in Matthew's Gospel 27:19) as a saint too.

Granted, we usually tend to see Pilate as "having his hands tied" by the religious leaders of Jerusalem, but historically, this didn't seem to be the case. Pilate may have seemed confused in the Gospel stories, but the facts of history portray him as pretty much being in charge and not being too scrupulous about whom he stepped on.

Hard to say.

Anyway, that's the story about Pontius Pilate.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

...any cadet who's under a lot of pressure at this time of year.

...all our military brothers and sisters - and their families - throughout the world, especially those in areas of risk.

GOT A QUESTION?

Q: Father, someone asked me whether Catholics can really call themselves "biblical Christians".

A: I believe the answer is yes.

The Catholic faith is a living faith that traces its history back to the witnessing of the Apostles and the communities they formed. Catholics recognize the Bible to be the authentic written expression of the faith of the early believers. We also believe that the Spirit of God guides the Church through the ages so that it interprets the biblical revelation without error.

Therefore, we look to the Bible in its entirety, but we also look to the rich Tradition of the Church when we seek the Scriptures' meaning.

When you use the phrase "biblical Christian", it can mean a lot of things to a lot of people.

We Catholics are biblical Christians in this sense: we reverence the Scriptures as inspired by God.

But we do not treat the Bible as a book that stands apart from the Church's experience and remains a solely "individual" experience.

We approach Scripture as a gift from God to the Church as a whole- a gift that has its home within the Church as a whole - because we believe that Christ came primarily to form a COMMUNITY of believers, not primarily to write a holy book that has its total meaning apart from the believing group.

So, should Catholics read and know the Bible?

Of course!

Should they use it as their ONLY source of formation in the faith of Jesus Christ.

No, because that would mean ignoring nearly 2000 years of the Holy Spirit's work within the Church.

This is what "Tradition" is: the practical, age-by-age application of the Scriptural

truths in every generation. Catholics believe that within the community of believers (known as "the Church"), the Holy Spirit preserves the Tradition from misinterpreting the Scriptures.

We don't believe that this is the case when an individual reads the Bible on his own. Individual interpretation is open to mistakes and exxagerations.

But we believe that the whole believing Church - because of the Holy Spirit's presence - cannot make a mistake in belief. That's why the Tradition of the Church is an important adjunct to the Scriptures.

UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

"In an avalanche,
each snowflake pleads "not guilty".
Stanislaus Lec

And that's the way it is, a day like all days, filled with those events that alter and illuminate our time...

and YOU ARE THERE!!

Keep pluggin' away...
ansd know that God is walking with you.
Best wishes for the weekend.
Woodie